

## **College Planning Timeline for High School Juniors**

### **Fall (August –October)**

#### ☐ **Stay on Track with Your Classes.**

Meet with your guidance counselor to make sure you are taking the minimum number of required high school courses to qualify for college admissions.

#### ☐ **Register to Take the PSAT.**

The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a standardized test that helps prepare students for the SAT. This test measures critical reading skills, math problem solving skills, and writing skills. You can register to take the PSAT/NMSQT as early as your freshman year, but in order to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) you must take the PSAT/NMSQT your junior year. Contact your high school counselor to register for the PSAT/NMSQT.

#### ☐ **Continue Researching Colleges and Start Narrowing Your Selection.**

As you continue to research colleges start making a list of colleges that meet your criteria (for example, size, location, cost, financial assistance, academic programs, student life, etc.) Weigh each criterion according to what is most important to you and list them in that order; then eliminate schools starting at the bottom of your list.

#### ☐ **Attend College Fairs and Financial Aid Events.**

Attending college fairs and financial aid events can be very informative when preparing for college.

#### ☐ **Enroll in Rigorous Classes.**

In addition to raising student achievement levels, enrolling in rigorous classes ensures postsecondary and career readiness.

#### ☐ **Maintain Good Grades.**

Getting good grades is hard work but in the end it will pay off. Good grades increase your chances of post secondary enrollment and scholarship eligibility.

#### ☐ **Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities.**

Being involved in extracurricular activities displays leadership, creativity, responsibility, and commitment. Colleges look for well round individuals and having these characteristics on your application will help you stand out, making your application more memorable.

### **Winter (November-February)**

#### ☐ **Prepare for the ACT/SAT**

The ACT test is a standardized test that focuses on four subject areas: English, math, reading, and science. The SAT test is a standardized test that focuses on critical reading, math, and writing. Preparing for the ACT/SAT is very important. Achieving a high test score not only increases your chances of attending the college of your choice, but it also increases your chances of receiving merit based scholarships and grants. To prepare for the ACT/SAT, check out the [I Have A Plan Iowa](#) test prep, [ACT](#) test prep, and [SAT](#) test prep.

☐ **Maintain Good Grades.**

The importance of maintaining good grades can't be stressed enough. Post secondary admission is determined by your grades, admissions test, GPA, and extracurricular activities.

☐ **Familiarize Yourself with the Financial Aid Process.**

Parents and students can become overwhelmed by the cost of college and the financial aid process. The FAFSA4caster is a great tool for getting an early start on college and financial aid planning. The FAFSA4caster provides an estimated EFC (Expected Family Contribution) to help students and families understand college costs and financial aid options. Additionally, data from the FAFSA4caster can be transferred to the FAFSA on the Web.

☐ **Start Your Scholarship Search.**

Scholarships are considered “free money”. Each year billions of dollars in scholarship money is awarded to students to assist with postsecondary education. In addition to searching the Internet, ask your school counselor and local businesses about scholarship opportunities. The following websites can help: [www.fastweb.com/](http://www.fastweb.com/), [www.collegeboard.org/](http://www.collegeboard.org/), [www.scholarships.com/](http://www.scholarships.com/), [www.finaid.org/scholarships/](http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/), [www.ihaveaplaniowa.gov/](http://www.ihaveaplaniowa.gov/)

☐ **Register for ACT/SAT.**

Many students take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of their junior year. To view the test dates for both the ACT and SAT in Iowa go to [gearupiowa.gov](http://gearupiowa.gov). To register for the ACT go to [www.actstudent.org/register/](http://www.actstudent.org/register/), to register for the SAT go to <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register>.

## **Spring (March-May)**

☐ **Take the ACT/SAT.**

Admission tests, or college entrance exams, are one of the many criteria used by colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. Preparing for the ACT/SAT is very important as it increasing the number of scholarships you are eligible for. Additionally, achieving a high test score increases your chances of attending the post secondary institution of your choice

☐ **Work on Your Personal Essay and Collect Letters of Recommendation.**

Post secondary institutions use college applications, personal essays, and letters of recommendation to determine admissions. Writing a personal essay gives you the opportunity to boast about yourself. Choose a topic that allows you to showcase your intellectual and creative achievements. For example choose a life altering event and explain why and how this event helped you become the person you are today. Letters of recommendation are also very important when applying for post secondary institutions. The admissions office uses these letters to learn more about you from an adults view.

☐ **Prepare a Challenging Schedule for Your Senior Year.**

Meet with your school counselor to determine what classes you will take your senior year. This is a good time to make sure you are meeting not only your high school graduation requirements but also post secondary admission requirements. To view Iowa Regent Admissions requirements go to [www.regents.iowa.gov/RAI/](http://www.regents.iowa.gov/RAI/).

☐ **Dual Enrollment; Get a Jump Start on Your College Degree.**

Taking high school and college credits is a great way for students to challenge themselves academically while earning college credits. In addition, dual enrollment can help decrease the cost of college by transferring credits. Contact your school counselor to find out if your high school participates in a dual enrollment programs with the local colleges and universities.

**Summer (June and July)**

☐ **Get a Summer Job.**

Reduce the amount of money you'll have to borrow in college by getting a summer job now and saving your money for tuition costs and other college expenses. As an added bonus, summer jobs provide valuable job experience and can help you find a college major and career that's right for you!

☐ **Create a Summer Reading List.**

Reading can increase your academic achievement by expanding your vocabulary while improving your concentration, focus, and memory. This summer, dedicate an hour of each day to reading. Need a lead on a good book? Check out these lists:

[http://dmlibraryreader.pbworks.com/w/page/47864242/Teen\\_reads](http://dmlibraryreader.pbworks.com/w/page/47864242/Teen_reads)

[http://dmlibraryreader.pbworks.com/w/page/48493539/teen\\_kirkus](http://dmlibraryreader.pbworks.com/w/page/48493539/teen_kirkus)

<http://dmlibraryreader.pbworks.com/w/page/48889100/Best%20Teen%20LJ>